

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3 and 5 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3 and 5 are amended. Further, the title is amended to conform to the claimed invention. Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration since the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; (c) satisfy a requirement of form asserted in the previous Office Action; (d) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (e) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the Office Action. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

I. The Claims Define Patentable Subject Matter

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 3 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Hattori (U.S. Patent No. 6,034,718) in view of Tagawa (U.S. Patent No. 4,772,945), and further in view of Takahashi (U.S. Patent No. 5,522,789). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, none of the references Hattori, Tagawa, or Takahashi, individually or in combination, discloses or suggests at least the capturing modes of an image capturing means provided with at least one input processing circuit include at least two of a capturing mode in which image data can be captured from television cameras from frame to frame and the image data from the television cameras can be captured by successively switching the television cameras from frame to frame, a capturing mode in which the image data can be captured from the television cameras from field to field and the image data from the television cameras can be captured by successively switching the television cameras from field to field and a capturing mode in which the image data can be captured from the television cameras from

pixel to pixel and the image data from the television cameras can be captured by successively switching the television cameras from pixel to pixel, as recited in independent claim 1.

The Office Action at page 3 acknowledges that Hattori does not disclose that image data is captured from each television camera from frame to frame, from field to field, and/or from pixel to pixel and the television cameras can be switched from frame to frame, from field to field, and/or from pixel to pixel. However, the Office Action asserts that Tagawa and Takahashi compensate for the deficiencies of Hattori. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Tagawa in Fig. 1 discloses a TV camera 1, a microphone 2 and a sensor 3 make a set for one channel and a plurality of such channels, for example, 8 channels are provided. The image data is selected by changing over switches between these channels. See col. 2, lines 22-34. Nowhere does Tagawa disclose or suggest the above-noted features of claim 1.

Takahashi discloses that image data is captured from the television camera from frame to frame and from field to field, but does not disclose that image data is captured from each television camera from pixel to pixel. The Office Action at page 3 asserts that a frame (two fields) and a filed image data are inherently made up of a plurality of pixels. However, this assertion pertains to TV images, and not Takahashi's features, because Takahashi's Fig. 15 discloses only a single camera. In sum, Takahashi does not disclose that image data can be captured from pixel to pixel, as in claim 1.

In addition, claim 1 has been amended to clarify the subject matter of the claimed invention. Specifically, claim 1 recites that capturing modes can be switched according to each operation step to capture image data, positioning members on which optical fibers are set are driven by a driving device on the basis of the captured image data so that positioning of optical axes and end faces of the optical fibers is made, and each of the operation steps up to fusion-splicing of the optical fibers by discharging of electrode rods is automatically carried out.

Takahashi relates to an endoscope. Tagawa relates to a surveillance system. Thus, one skilled in the art would not be motivated to combine Takahashi and Tagawa with Hattori because Takahashi and Tagawa do not relate to fusion-splicing of the optical fibers, which is recited in claim 1.

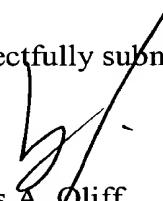
Therefore, independent claim 1 defines patentable subject matter. Claims 3 and 5 depend from independent claim 1, and therefore also define patentable subject matter. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 3 and 5 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,


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